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UNDP COUNTRY PROGRAMMES AND RELATED ISSUES

Reports on mid-term reviews: an overview

Report of the Administrator

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its decision 92/28 of 26 May 1992, the Governing Council requested the Administrator to report on mid-term reviews of fifth cycle country and inter-country programmes undertaken during the period 1993 to 1995. 1/ The present report represents the fourth in a series responding to this request and covers mid-term reviews of regional programmes undertaken in the period January-June 1995.

2. As the first three sets of mid-term review reports submitted to the Executive Board exclusively covered country programmes, the present report focuses on reviews of regional programmes in order to highlight the substantive and management issues unique to such programmes and focus deliberations on them. Towards this end, addenda 1-5 to the present document contains reviews of the following programmes: the global and interregional programme (DP/1995/47/Add.1); the regional programme for Africa (DP/1995/47/Add.2); the regional programme for Asia and the Pacific (DP/1995/47/Add.3); the regional programme for the Arab States (DP/1995/47/Add.4); the regional programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (DP/1995/47/Add.5); and the regional programme for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (DP/1995/47/Add.6.

3. Collectively, these programmes account for approximately $380 million or approximately 12 per cent of fifth cycle indicative planning figure (IPF) entitlements.

4. With respect to country programmes, UNDP completed about 40 mid-term reviews in the period January-June 1995 and expects to complete a further

50 reviews in the remainder of the year. The main findings of these reviews will be reported to the Executive Board at its second regular session 1996. Annex II provides an update of the schedule of mid-term reviews for 1995.

II. THE MID-TERM REVIEW PROCESS

5. The mid-term review process for regional programmes is decidedly different from that of country programmes. It requires considerably more time and resources to complete, owing to the multiplicity of stakeholders (governments, intergovernmental organizations and specialized agencies) who have to be consulted and the different project sites that need to be visited during the review. It also has to be a largely United Nations-led process, there being no clear local ownership for most regional programmes.

6. In the first half of 1995, UNDP was able to complete formal mid-term reviews of the global and interregional programme, and the regional programmes for Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean regions. Desk reviews of the regional programmes of the Arab States and of Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States were undertaken to permit joint consideration of all regional programmes by the Executive Board at the current session.

7. UNDP headquarters supported the mid-term review exercises in Africa and Asia and the Pacific regions through Special Programme Resources (SPR), which were used to provide consultancies for thematic and sectoral analyses of the programmes, and also to facilitate the participation of government officials at the meetings. The meetings themselves were well attended by high-level officials from UNDP, government and intergovernmental organizations. Notably, the meeting for the Asia and Pacific regional programme, held in Kuala Lumpur in March 1995, was officially opened by the Prime Minister of Malaysia. The Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean convened a collective consultation with all the countries of the region in New York in June 1995.

III. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

A. Relevance

8. In general, the reviews concluded that fifth cycle regional programmes remain relevant to the development challenges facing the different regions of the world. The programmes have largely conformed to the six areas of focus identified in Governing Council decision 90/34 and refined under Executive Board decision 94/14. 2/ Some of the fifth cycle regional programmes (i.e. those for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Arab States) benefited significantly from formal evaluations of preceding programmes and in fact carried over a lot of the objectives, concentration areas and financial commitments from them. For the regional programmes of Africa and the Arab States, the commitments carried over were so significant that resources available for new programming under the fifth cycle were more than halved as a consequence. The third regional programme for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States underwent significant review in 1994 to reorient it towards the new countries in the

region, their circumstances as countries in transition and also in the context of the UNDP mandate for sustainable human development.

B. Achievements

9. Fifth cycle regional programmes have tended to focus on long-term issues such as economic integration, basic health and food research, debt management and the control of such diseases as HIV/AIDS. Because of the long-term nature of activities on these issues and the need for collaboration with other technical and financial partners in addressing them, it is difficult to isolate the achievements of the individual UNDP contributions. In general, however, the reviews noted progress in a number of areas: for example, in the work of the interregional programme through the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Tropical Diseases Research Programmes and the United Nations Joint and Co-sponsored Programme on AIDS. Other progress was noted with respect to the contribution of the regional programme for Africa in the eradication of river blindness in West Africa, or that of the regional programme for Latin America and the Caribbean with respect to substantial investment secured for a range of manufacturing and agricultural business activities in the Caribbean.

C. Linkages

10. In general, regional programmes remain relatively highly centralized operations. This, coupled with the complexity of dealing with numerous stakeholders, makes it particularly difficult to integrate them with national IPF programmes and to localize and sustain their results. In fact, national IPF resources are rarely earmarked at the country level to support or supplement actions taken at the global or regional level. Also, there do not seem to be any systematic linkages between the global and interregional programme and the regional programmes of the regional bureaux. The mid-term review of the global and interregional programme noted, for example, that the UNDP regional bureaux demonstrated very little knowledge of its agricultural research projects.

11. The products of the global and interregional programme have ordinarily been most utilized by participating developing countries and by multilateral and bilateral agencies. In this instance, the interregional debt management project supported by UNDP, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Bank has been particularly successful. Two subregional projects have been launched for a dozen countries in Eastern and Southern African States, and for 3 Baltic republics, and in 1993, the central banks of 12 eastern and southern African States launched initiatives to upgrade the management of their external debt as local follow-up to this project.

D. Focus

12. Because of the inherent difficulties in applying the programme approach to their projects, 3/ most regional programmes remain project-oriented although significant attempts have been made during the fifth cycle towards fewer

concentration areas and larger projects. When compared to previous programmes, all programmes show significant reductions in the number of stand-alone projects. The most dramatic achievement was noted in the Asia and Pacific region, where the projects were reduced from 350 to 12 regional and 32 subregional projects. (See also para. 20.)

E. Resource situation

13. In general, fifth cycle regional programmes had less programmable resources than before as a result of overprogramming during the previous cycle and the overall reduction in IPF resources. At the time of the review, the programmes were generally fully committed, leaving very little room to make adjustments or launch new initiatives. In the experience of the regional programme for Africa, the resource situation led to scaling down the scope of approved projects. However, the reviews also demonstrated that the programmes had successfully pooled their resources with others in the same fields of endeavour or used IPF resources as seed money to attract other donors. In both contexts, for example, the global and interregional programme and the fifth regional programme for Africa had significantly leveraged their nominal IPF allocations. Annex I provides a summary of the resource situation at the time of the review.

IV. SUMMARY OF REVIEWS

A. Global and interregional programmes (1992-1996)

14. The fifth cycle global and interregional programme was initiated in 1992 under the auspices of the Division of Global and Interregional Programmes. Following internal reorganization in 1994, 4/ the Division was eliminated and the responsibility for global programmes assigned to the new Science, Technology and Private Sector Division in the Bureau for Programme and Policy Support. Responsibility for interregional programmes was distributed among the BPPS Divisions according to thematic focus.

15. The mid-term review concluded that, in general, the programme had made significant progress towards the attainment of objectives outlined in document DP/INT/GLO/2, "Global and interregional programmes for the fifth cycle (1992-1996)". Programme activities had focused on people-centred issues such as health, staples, environmentally appropriate technology, community-based water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS prevention, urban management and development, trade expansion and electoral assistance.

16. The review also noted that as a result of overprogramming and the cut in IPF resources, the global and interregional programme was compelled to withdraw from commitments made earlier in anticipation of full IPF resources. The programme, however, seemed to enjoy extensive collaboration with bilateral and multilateral agencies, including private foundations. Programme activities were, on average, leveraged by as much as tenfold, reflecting the extent of support and interest in its products by various stake-holders.

B. Regional programme for Africa (1992-1996)

17. With the adjustment for overprogramming in the fourth cycle, and the subsequent reduction in resources, net IPF entitlements for the fourth regional programme for Africa were $79.3 million (compared to $226.1 million for the previous programme), distributed among three areas of concentration: (a) regional cooperation and integration; (b) long-term strategic planning; and (c) fostering human development. While the reduction in resources resulted in significantly lower programming levels, it encouraged UNDP to intensify its resource mobilization efforts for the Programme. At the time of the review, regional cost-sharing and trust fund resources amounted to $35.4 million or about 45 per cent of the available IPF resources.

18. The mid-term review concluded that the programme remained relevant to the development challenges facing the Africa region. Significant progress was noted in a number of areas, namely: the eradication of river blindness in 10 West African States, which has resulted in the repopulation of 25 million hectares; the development of the methodology for national long-term perspective studies (NLTPS) and the application of these studies in 9 countries; expanded access to safe water and sanitation in over 20 countries through two subregional offices based in Abidjan and Nairobi; initiatives related to the control and management of the HIV/AIDS epidemic; support for entrepreneurship development in 20 countries through the African Management Services Company and the African Capacity-Development Facility. The most effective of these interventions were those that had been supported over a long period of time and had strategic alliances with other donors and technical partners. Notably, the eradication of river blindness was a result of a concerted 20-year collaborative effort that entailed the participation of UNDP, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank and numerous bilateral donors.

C. Regional programme for Asia and the Pacific (1992-1996)

19. The mid-term review of the fifth regional programme for the Asia and Pacific region noted a number of substantive and managerial improvements over the previous programme, especially: (a) greater focus on three areas of concentration (i.e., human development through poverty alleviation; economic management and reform; and environment and natural resource management); and (b) greater decentralization and emphasis on subregional cooperation.

20. From nearly 350 projects during the fourth programme, there are now only 12 programmes of a regional scale and 32 at the subregional level. While some clustering of projects within programmes persists, more cohesive programme strategies are clearly emerging.

21. A wider range and diversity of programmes is evident at the subregional level. In the South Pacific subregion, there is a particular emphasis on environmental and human development issues while in the South Asia programme, poverty alleviation has a high profile. In the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the focus is on institutional interlinkages and in North-East Asia, the focus is on the development of the Tumen river basin and also on

critical environment issues. In Indo-China, the programme continues the long-standing commitment of UNDP to the development of the Mekong basin.

22. The mid-term review concluded that the fifth programme continues to offer a range of highly useful technical cooperation services in regional and national capacity-building for policy formulation and implementation. The programme has been particularly important in enabling countries in the region to conform to new multilateral agendas and norms.

D. Regional programme for the Arab States (1994-1996)

23. The net IPF resources for the third regional programme for the Arab States was $16.265 million after adjustment for overprogramming during the second programme and the reduction in IPF resources, as compared to $47.320 million for the second programme. The programme is already fully committed and several ongoing projects are cost-shared, to the level of $8.7 million by the Arab regional institutions (i.e., the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Arab Gulf Fund for United Nations Development Organizations, the Arab Maghreb Union and the Arab Labour Organization).

24. Three new programmes were envisaged under the third programme: the regional Sustainable Human Development (SHD) Programme; the Economic Integration and Trade Programme; and the Sustainable Energy Programme. In May 1995, the SHD Programme organized a workshop on the preparation of national human development reports for participants from 11 countries. Also, the Economic Integration and Trade Programme conducted a series of workshops on the consequences of the Uruguay Round for the region. In a separate development, UNDP joined the World Bank, the European Union and the European Investment Bank in expanding the Mediterranean Environment Technical Assistance Programme.

E. Regional programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (1992-1996)

25. The regional programme for Latin America and the Caribbean region was approved in May 1992 with an adjusted IPF allocation of $22.623 million, and six areas of concentration, namely: poverty alleviation and social development; governance, the state and civil society; modernization of the productive sector; integration and international economic relations; the environment and development; and drugs and development.

26. The mid-term review concluded that the programme had retained its relevance with regard to regional or subregional integration and cooperation, and other issues of shared concern to the countries of the region. On the broad themes of poverty alleviation and the environment, the programme helped to articulate a common regional policy in global negotiations. In the area of governance, it provided support to the processes of political and economic reform occurring in the region. The programme also provided advisory services to the region during the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)/World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations and in specific cases of regional and subregional integration.

Finally, the programme is assisting in regional efforts to determine the impact of the illicit drug trade on development.

27. The Caribbean component of the regional programme for Latin America and the Caribbean has already made a valuable contribution in the areas of socio-economic development. With its assistance, the level of non-traditional agricultural exports and agricultural production has been boosted; substantial investment has been secured for a range of manufacturing and agricultural business activities; through training, enhanced capacities have been developed for economic and social policy formulation and implementation; the institutional capacities of several regional institutions, including those of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) secretariat, have been strengthened; and initiatives to deepen and widen the Caribbean integration movement have been embarked upon.

F. Regional programme for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (1992-1996)

28. In 1994, UNDP undertook a review of the third regional programme for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States with the view to making it more responsive to the emerging needs of the countries of the region. Five key areas of concentration were identified: external resources management; democracy, governance and participation; gender in development; transition to market economies and privatization; and environment.

29. Specifically, a training project in aid management and resource mobilization has been developed for 13 countries. Another project supports the development of democratic institutions and processes in various countries, including the establishment of a Commissioner for Human Rights and Ombudsman Unit in the Russian Federation. This latter activity has led to requests for similar assistance from several other countries in the region. Notably, UNDP has also launched the preparation of national human development reports in nearly all the countries of the region. These reports are being used as an entry point for the adoption of the sustainable human development approach in the region.

30. The full potential of the programme remains to be realized because of the complexity of the needs of the countries of the region, most of which did not exist as independent states only four years ago.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

31. In general, fifth cycle regional programmes have conformed to the areas of focus identified in decisions 90/34 and 94/14 and have been responsive to the (changing) needs of the various regions. The programmes have faced considerable resource constraints due to overprogramming in previous cycles and the general decline in IPF resources, but partially made up for this through resource mobilization efforts.

32. Nevertheless, the reviews showed that regional programmes remain the most viable mechanism through which UNDP can effectively address development

challenges that transcend national boundaries, such as economic integration, health concerns, especially the HIV/AIDS epidemic, environmental and resource management issues, transfer of technology and development-related research.

33. Based on the reviews, the following recommendations are made:

(a) The trend towards fewer and larger projects observed in the fifth cycle regional programmes should be maintained. Executive Board decision 94/14 should provide the basis of the focus and coherence for all future UNDP-supported regional programmes;

(b) All programmes should, to the extent possible, establish linkages between national IPF programmes and relevant regional programmes. The formulation of national IPF programmes and their mid-term reviews should provide possible entry points for establishing these linkages;

(c) Efforts should also be made to localize systematically the ownership of the products of regional programmes through decentralized management of project activities, increased use of regional and national entities in project implementation and establishing the linkages referred to above.

VI. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

34. The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report.

Notes

1/ This term is used to cover global, interregional and regional programmes.

2/ Together, the decisions covered the thematic areas of poverty alleviation, regeneration of the environment, women in development, job creation, management development, technology development and technical cooperation among developing countries.

3/ Notably, the primary tenet of national ownership under the programme approach cannot be easily applied to regional programmes although it is usually bestowed on intergovernmental organizations in these programmes.

4/ Reported on to the Board in document DP/1994/39, "Initiatives for change".

Annex I

SUMMARY FINANCIAL DATA ON COMMITMENTS AGAINST EXPENDITURES OF IPFs AT REVIEW

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Programme	Available IPF a/ 1	IPF commitments at review 2	Column 2 as percentage of 1
Interregional	124 825	135 641 b/	108.7
Africa	79 330	76 334	96.2
Arab States	16 265	14 239	87.5
Asia and the Pacific	130 056	139 287 c/	107.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	22 623	21 797	96.3
Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States	6 676	5 511	82.5

a/ Carry-over from fourth cycle plus fifth cycle IPF except in the case of the programme for the Arab States, which covers the period 1994-1996.

b/ It is anticipated that through increased cost-sharing contributions, further budgetary reductions and rephasings of approved budgets to the successor programming period, IPF expenditures will not exceed IPF resources available during the programme period.

c/ Ongoing negotiations with executing agencies for downward revision of budgets are expected to result in a total budget reduction of approximately $9 million, and actual expenditures will fall within the IPF resources available.

Annex II

SCHEDULE OF MID-TERM REVIEWS FOR 1995

January-June 1995

AFRICA	ASIA/PACIFIC	ARAB STATES	LATIN AMERICA/ CARIBBEAN	EUROPE/ CIS	GLOBAL
Africa regional	Asia/Pacific regional	Lebanon	Latin America and Caribbean regional	Malta	Global and inter-regional
Burkina Faso	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Morocco		Hungary	
Chad		Saudi Arabia		Romania	
Congo	Malaysia	Sudan	Bolivia		
Gabon	Marshall Islands	Syrian Arab Republic	Brazil		
Guinea	Micronesia	United Arab Emirates	Chile		
Guinea-Bissau	Multi-island	Yemen	Colombia		
Mozambique	Tuvalu		Costa Rica		
Nigeria	Viet Nam		El Salvador		
Swaziland			Honduras		
Uganda			Jamaica		
Sao Tome and Principe			Mexico		
			Peru		
			Turks and Caicos		
			Uruguay		
			Venezuela		

July-Dec. 1995

Cameroon	Bhutan	Bahrain	Argentina	Bulgaria
Côte d'Ivoire	Cambodia	Djibouti	Belize	
Equatorial Guinea	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Jordan	Costa Rica	
Ethiopia		Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Cuba	
Gambia			Dominica	
Ghana	Maldives		Dominican Republic	
Kenya	Mongolia		Montserrat	
Lesotho	Nepal		Multi-island	
Madagascar	Palau		Nicaragua	
Mauritania	Papua New Guinea		Panama	
Mauritius	Philippines		Paraguay	
Namibia	Republic of Korea			
Niger	Sri Lanka			
Sierra Leone	Thailand			
United Republic of Tanzania	Vanuatu			